

**State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind  
Public Forum  
Hannibal, MO  
November 1, 2007**

**Council Members Present:** Donna Borgmeyer, Beverly Kaskadden, Ceil Callahan, Debbi Head, Brian Wekamp, Clay Berry, John Wunder, Jim Sucharski and Kim Gerlt – liaison

**RSB Staff Present:** Jim Brinkmann and Mike Merrick

There were no members of the public present. There was discussion about the area that the Mid-Mo office covers and in particular the Hannibal area.

There was discussion about how to improve public attendance to the forums. There was discussion about asking successful consumers to attend the public forum and tell their stories of success and to see if employers of RSB consumers would be interested in attending the public forum. Inviting health providers and Independent Living agencies was also considered.

Dr Sucharski said that he supports continuing moving the public forums across the state to make consumers aware the Council cares enough to come to their area to get their input. Clay Berry suggested that the forum locations may need to be moved to locations that the blind community typically go to rather than focus on a hotel that is easily accessible. It was decided that targeting is the issue and that contacts within the community who can tell the Council of individuals who would benefit needs to be done. Currently target mailings are being sent to the consumers who are currently receiving services from RSB as well as to newspapers and radio stations.

It was decided that the next public forum, which will be in February, will be held at Alhambra. Immediately following this meeting mailings will go out letting people know where the next public forum will be held so that people have time to plan ahead and think about issues they may want to bring forward. Mailings will be sent to area educators, teachers and organizations in the area who deal with low vision or blind consumers to personally invite them to attend the public forum.

A motion will be made at tomorrow's meeting to move this forward.

**State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind**  
**November 2, 2007**  
**Hannibal, MO**

**Roll Call:** Clay Berry, Donna Borgmeyer, Ceil Callahan, Debbi Head, Beverly Kaskadden, Jim Sucharski, Brian Wekamp, John Wunder, Kim Gerlt - liaison

**Absent:** Lawrence Luck, Russ McCampbell, James Pelfrey, Phyllis Lovett,

**RSB Members Present:** Jim Brinkmann and Mike Merrick

There was discussion about the newspaper article about SRC member James Pelfrey and his new job at the University of Missouri. The article will be sent to the SRC members.

**Minutes**

Motion was made by Jim Sucharski to accept the minutes, seconded by Brian Wekamp. Motion passed unanimously.

**RSB District Office**

Jim Brinkman from the Mid-MO Office gave an update on the office. The new fiscal year started, last year Mid-Mo had 42 successful VR closures, of which 32 were competitive employment closures and 10 were homemaker closures. Mid-Mo had 208 OBS closures and 16 ILR successful closures. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are averaging 72 cases and the Rehabilitation Teachers have 83 cases. The Mid-MO Office consists of 2 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, 3 Rehabilitation Teachers, 1 Orientation and Mobility Instructor, 1 Children's Specialist, 2 Rehabilitation Assistants, and 1 Clerk IV. Jim discussed the areas/counties that Mid-Mo covers. In Hannibal and the surrounding area there has always been a lot of success with placement because there is a lot of tourism here. Some placements from last year include a self-employment, which is a shop that sells items from hand-held knick knacks all the way to large furniture, a counselor for VA services in Marion County, a social worker with a home health and senior agency, a hospital switchboard operator and a lady who had never held a competitive job was placed in a position doing paper shredding which includes either doing onsite shredding or shredding at the office. The company said by spring of next year they would like to look for

a second position. For the next fiscal year Mid-Mo has targeted 50 employment closures, 40 employment and 10 homemakers. In Hannibal area there are about 20 people on the RT caseload. RT counselor Ellen Langdon has a monthly support meeting that averages about 20 people who attend. This office works with the local CIL and they provide transportation to the consumers.

### **Child Support Call Center**

The Young-Williams Call center is contracted through the state of Missouri and opened a year ago in September. They are a firm in Mississippi that has several call centers that do this type of work and it's strictly about child support payments. FSD employees mail letters to individuals' employers about child support payment. The call center takes calls from a variety of people including employers who may call the call center to see how to fill out the garnishment form, someone needing to check on their payment, or individuals getting their wages garnished. The center is paid based on how many calls they take. Employees refer people to other counties. When employees hang the phone up they log their information and they are done, there is no follow up. Jim has been working with the supervisor at this location. A rehab engineer has been working with this system so that it will work with Jaws and Zoom Text. The first RSB client started 4 weeks ago. Her first month consisted of training, the first 2 weeks were sit-down 8 to 5 training in a class room and then she sat with another person to observe. Next week the RSB employee will start taking calls on her own. The employer is very excited about this employee. In a few more weeks one or two more clients will interview with the center and start the process all over. The call center employs 100 full time staff and 10 part time staff. These call centers have a fairly high turn over the first year and this center has had an 80% turn over rate since opening in September.

### **RSB Director's Report**

Mike Merrick gave the RSB report. This year in Vocational Rehabilitation RSB successfully rehabilitated in employment 256 individuals, which is 10 more than last year. The rehab rate is 76%, this is a ratio between the number who leave through employment by the total number who leave the program. Independent Living successfully rehabilitated 83 individuals, OBS successfully rehabilitated 906 individuals with rehab rate of 94.3%. The weekly total earnings of those individuals closed last year is \$96,182; annually this group will earn \$5,001,481. The total rehab cost for all of these individuals was \$3,000,164. The average cost for those cases was

\$12,219. There were 27 homemaker closures, which means that the vast majority of RSB's closures were employment closures. RSB will be passing all standards and indicators for 2006-2007 year.

**RSB Audit** – Currently there are auditors from the State Auditor's office doing a single audit on RSB. There are 2 rounds of cases being reviewed and they just finished the first round of cases. So far they haven't found anything profound. RSB is now in a 2-year audit cycle; prior to the last audit RSB had not been audited in a dozen years and since that audit they have added RSB to bi-annual audits. This is a fiscal and eligibility audit. RSB is cooperating fully and completely. The auditors have been very helpful. This audit is going very well.

**SRC Appointments** – Jim Uffman has been appointed by the Department to assist RSB with Council appointments. RSB has applications from 7 of the 8 individuals that are initial appointments. Mr. Uffman is going to set up a meeting to help get the appointments done. The only SRC representative that cannot be term-limited is the CAP representative. It is unknown how the terms will be assigned.

### **Deputy Director**

There is still no Director for RSB. The FSD Director is still handling this; filling the position is completely the Director's decision. Right now things in RSB are running smoothly with Mark Laird serving as acting deputy director.

### **Electronic Case Management**

The RFP went out in September and bids were requested. At this point responses have been received and are in the evaluation process. Once the bids went out the process is completely under OA's rule. Hopefully a decision will be made in within the next 30 to 60 days.

### **Randolph Sheppard Program**

Terry Smith is the state agency director in Tennessee and a former BEP director who has been contracted to evaluate the BEP program. Mr. Smith visited RSB in September and October and did a survey of the BEP vendors, who are self-employed business people. After the survey was complete Mr. Smith visited about 15 facilities in St. Louis, Kansas City and Jefferson City. Mr. Smith wrote a basic summary of his findings and then met with Mike Merrick, Mark Laird and Kevin Faust to discuss this. He's identified areas

of concern such as no growth in the program, income going down, and problems paying the benefits package. Mr. Smith is going to offer ideas of how to make structural improvements and make improvements in the policy. Mr. Smith came back to assist in creating a strategic plan in a meeting including BEP staff, vendors and LBOMB representatives. Mr. Smith will be back in November to finish this. Administration is very supportive of these changes. When the BEP Strategic Plan is finalized the Council will receive a copy of the plan.

### **Transition Study Program**

The State Plan that was submitted said RSB would improve transition. There has been a committee working on this policy and they have submitted a 3-page document on transition with definitions and the basic purposes. Mike Merrick pulled some documents such as The Fundamentals of Transitions and Cooperative Work Experience Agreement between DESE, RSB and DVR, which pertains to the cooperative work experience during school hours with the schools cooperation, which are also being used to develop this policy. Mike Merrick went to a transition team building meeting who is trying to get the state's transition team back together. First item that will be worked on by this team is how to deal with confidentiality so that information can be shared between the various service agencies. The second thing is that they are going to come up with a better set of resources for who should be involved and what should be done for transition. Mike Merrick is on the committee doing the research on confidentiality. RSB is working on their policy, which will provide the definitive guidance for the VR Counselor as to what to do other than open a case, which is not always appropriate. A delineation of who is responsible will be developed. This policy will outline when it's appropriate to spend VR Dollars. Currently there are no identified points as to when a person enters transition, so a set of guidelines will be developed to address this also.

### **Executive Summary of the Shared Vision Summit**

There were 19 different organizations represented and 38 people in attendance. This event will be conducted again. There was discussion about the action items and shared vision items that were discussed at the Summit. The summary was emailed to all Council members prior to the meeting.

### **Four State Regional Summit**

Employment Summit was held in Kansas City and RSB had good representation at the meeting; all of the District Supervisors were there along

with Mike Merrick and Mark Laird. It was nice to meet with employment related staff from different states. Everyone shared what other agencies are doing as well as cooperative work with other businesses. There was a panel of 8 businesses the second morning and each got up and said this is the type of company we have. CitiCard got up and said we have an ongoing relationship with RSB where we have training sites and if RSB has someone who is eligible they send them to us. None of the other agencies had a relationship like RSB did.

### **Consumer Choice**

Mike Merrick passed out the full policy on Consumer Choice to the Council members. This is being discussed as a follow up to the comments made by a participant at the previous public forum. There was a brief review of the process of consumer choice. Choice of a vendor, or any other choice that is made during the VR process, is not unlimited. Consumers do not just get to say exactly what they are going to do because there are rules and regulations that RSB has to follow. Consumers get an informed choice; they are not just given a list of names and told to choose. In order for a client to make an informed choice they have to be given information, which is why, it is the counselor's responsibility to inform the client of the available choices.

### **Annual Report**

Evaluations Committee is responsible for the annual report. This committee consists of Debbi Head, Beverly Kaskadden, James Pelfrey, Ruby Polk and Brian Wekamp. Debbi Head is the Chair of this committee. A conference call will be scheduled for this committee.

### **Statewide Events**

Vision Summit – April 2 & 3, Mike Merrick will send out a note to everyone next week. Will be held in Columbia.

Power Up – April 21 & 22, Lake Ozark

AER - It is unknown at this point where or when the conference will be held.

### **New Business:**

Small Business Policy - RSB's current policy for a small business start up is to pay up to 75% of the start up cost of a small business up to \$3,750. RSB has reviewed the policy on doing this. RSB sees the \$3,750 as their share of the start up but in addition they can purchase equipment. RSB would like to initiate the policy that keeps the 75% RSB/25% client contribution but raises

the maximum amount that RSB may extend to \$17,750. This is the average start up cost including what is spent on equipment. In this new amount everything is included, equipment and other start up costs. Exceptions to this policy will have to be approved by the Deputy Director. Clay Berry moved that the motion be accepted as Mike Merrick stated, Ceil seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Jim Sucharski made a motion that we continue having the meetings on a regional basis, Brian Wekamp seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Next meeting is February 7 & 8 in Kansas City. Clay Berry volunteered to host the public forum at Alphapointe.

Agenda items for next meeting:

Trend of survey data

Meeting locations

Randolph Sheppard Program Update

Electronic Case Management

FSD Director's Report

Transition Study Program Update

Shared Vision Update

Statewide Events

Legislative Update

State Plan

SRC Appointment Status

Supported Employment